United Nations

Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General appoints members of Special Commission to monitor Iraq's destruction of its weapons systems.

- Office of United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator reports 1,000 people killed by cyclone in Bangladesh.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has appointed 19 experts as members of the Special Commission to monitor and verify Iraq's destruction or rendering harmless of its weapons systems. The experts come from Norway, Japan, Nigeria, Poland, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Canada, Australia, Austria, Soviet Union, Netherlands, Finland, France, Indonesia, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, China and Venezuela.

On 22 April, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Ambassador Rolf Ekeus of Sweden as Executive Chairman, and Robert L. Gallucci of the United States as Deputy Executive Chairman, of the Commission, which was called for in Security Council resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April. The resolution -- setting the terms for a cease-fire -- calls, among other things, for the removal of all of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Members of the Commission represent five groups: biological and chemical weapons; ballistic missiles; nuclear-weapons capabilities; future compliance; and operations support. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to monitor the removal of nuclear-weapons-usable material from Iraq.

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The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) reported today that a cyclone had hit the Bangladesh coastline yesterday, killing an estimated 1,000 people -- a figure which is expected to rise.

The agency said the storm had caused severe damage to housing, also interrupting communication with the affected area, which had made the assessment of damage preliminary. It also said the early-warning system and cyclone shelters were believed to have mitigated the number of casualties.

Because of the gravity of the situation, the Bangladesh Government has issued an appeal for international assistance.

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